

Community Development

Mission

To provide technical assistance and funding opportunities to local communities to preserve and improve the quality of life for Indiana's residents.

Summary of Activities

The **Department of Commerce** (DOC) manages a range of programs that help local communities improve economic development and quality of life for Hoosiers. Those programs include the Community Development Action Grant program (CDAG), the Enterprise Zone program, the Neighborhood Assistance Program (NAP) and the Community Promotion/Planning Fund (CPF). CDAG helps expand the administrative and program development capacity of local not-for-profit organizations whose purposes include economic development. The Enterprise Zone program strives to improve the quality of life in distressed urban areas through community development and business development initiatives and incentives. NAP encourages investment in projects that benefit residents in economically distressed urban and rural areas by allowing local not-for-profit organizations to leverage private contributions through the allocation of state income tax credits to program investors. CPF is a grant program designed to encourage long-range community planning by local governments and not-for-profit organizations.



The largest DOC grant program is the Community Focus Fund (CFF), which is funded with federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) dollars and provides technical assistance grants of up to \$500,000 to small cities, towns, and counties across the state. Local CFF projects include fire protection, child care, downtown revitalization, wetlands management, historic preservation, environmental assessment, utilities, senior and community centers, and infrastructure. In addition, the DOC administers the Indiana Main Street program, which is focused on the revitalization and prosperity of downtown areas in communities across the state. Main Street staff act as a resource to communities and organizations that are working to improve their downtowns and provides training opportunities, a lending library, an annual conference and technical assistance on various topics and projects.

The **Commission on Community Service and Volunteerism** (CCSV) is the central coordinating office for Indiana's community service and volunteer sectors. It promotes a comprehensive state plan supporting volunteer organizations and local community programs in need of technical assistance or funding.

The Build Indiana Fund also provides direct legislative appropriations to local communities for a variety of infrastructure and community development projects, including roads, sewers, community centers, parks, museums, fairgrounds, libraries, memorials, and fire trucks.

External Factors

State Community Development grants require local communities to provide matching funds from private, not-for-profit or other government sources. To the extent that local governments and not-for-profit organizations are unable to raise matching funds locally, the state's ability to engage in community development partnerships is limited. Technological advancements and environmental concerns continue to challenge local governments, particularly in providing and maintaining adequate water and sewer infrastructure. It is anticipated that these needs will continue to place a great demand on funding as existing systems continue to age.

Evaluation and Accomplishments

In 1999, the DOC assisted 167 communities and organizations through the CDAG, NAP, CPF and Enterprise Zone programs, leveraging many additional dollars for local projects. In addition to individual community assistance, the DOC has provided the public with information about community development programs and initiatives through a series of conferences and workshops. Indiana Main Street held its statewide conference in October 1999, while the Community Development Division presented five regional workshops across the state in Spring 2000. Education and outreach activities are critical to the success of community development programs in improving communities across the state. These efforts educate local government officials, increase awareness of assistance programs, and lead to projects that enhance the quality of life in Indiana's communities. In addition, 430 Americorps students and more than 4,300 volunteers developed and implemented programs throughout the state that provided tutoring for at-risk students, drug and alcohol abuse prevention, and home restoration for seniors.

"The state's community development programs assist projects that will make Hoosier communities even better places to live. These programs help make Indiana stronger, healthier and better prepared for the future."

- Lieutenant Governor
Joseph E. Kernan

Plans for the Biennium

The DOC will continue its efforts to promote livable communities and improve the quality of life for Indiana residents by providing financial assistance to eligible communities through the CDBG Program. CDBG monies can be used for local planning activities and for the direct costs of environmental infrastructure (waste and sewer) improvements, housing assistance to low- and moderate-income families, special purpose facilities such as daycare centers, job training assistance to upgrade the skills of low- and moderate-income workers, and brownfield remediation activities.

The Department will also assist in providing local services to needy citizens through the department's Neighborhood Assistance Program. In addition, with continued funding by the General Assembly, the department's Individual Development Account program will further assist low-income Hoosiers by helping them establish saving accounts for home purchases, educational and training expenses, and the start-up or purchase of their own business.

